



I AM BETTER THAN YOU

Sigrun Srivastav



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"I am stronger than you," says Micki my brother. He always says that. Always.

Because he's a boy he thinks he's stronger—and braver—and better than me.

But he is wrong!

My brother says, "I can whistle."

"So can I," I say and whistle my favourite song. So does my brother. We make such a noise that Mother throws us out of the house.



At the back of the house, in our garden, my brother turns to me and says, "I can play cricket and you can't."

"I could play cricket if you would only let me!" I cry. "I've asked you ten thousand times."

My brother nods and tells me for the ten thousandth and one time, "Girls don't play cricket. They can't run."

That makes me very angry.

"Of course girls can run," I shout at him. "I can run faster than you."

"No, you can't," growls my brother and gets ready for a race.





I am off before he starts. I run across the garden. I jump over the flowerbeds. That's easy. I hop over the vegetable bed. That isn't easy. There is a big yellow



pumpkin in the way. I trip over it and fall. My brother tumbles over me. When we get up and look around there is no pumpkin on the ground. But there is pumpkin all over us!



"Hey, you are dirty," I laugh at my brother.
And my brother retorts, "I am dirtier than you."
I protest, "No, you aren't."
He shouts, "Yes, I am."

Mother arrives. She shakes her head. "Look at you!" she says. "Just look at you!" And she sends us inside to change our clothes.





I put on my best dress and look at myself in the mirror. I look very smart.

But Micki says, "I look smarter."

That's not true.

He says, "I am smarter and I am taller than you."

He is taller. He really is taller. So I shout, "But I am fatter."







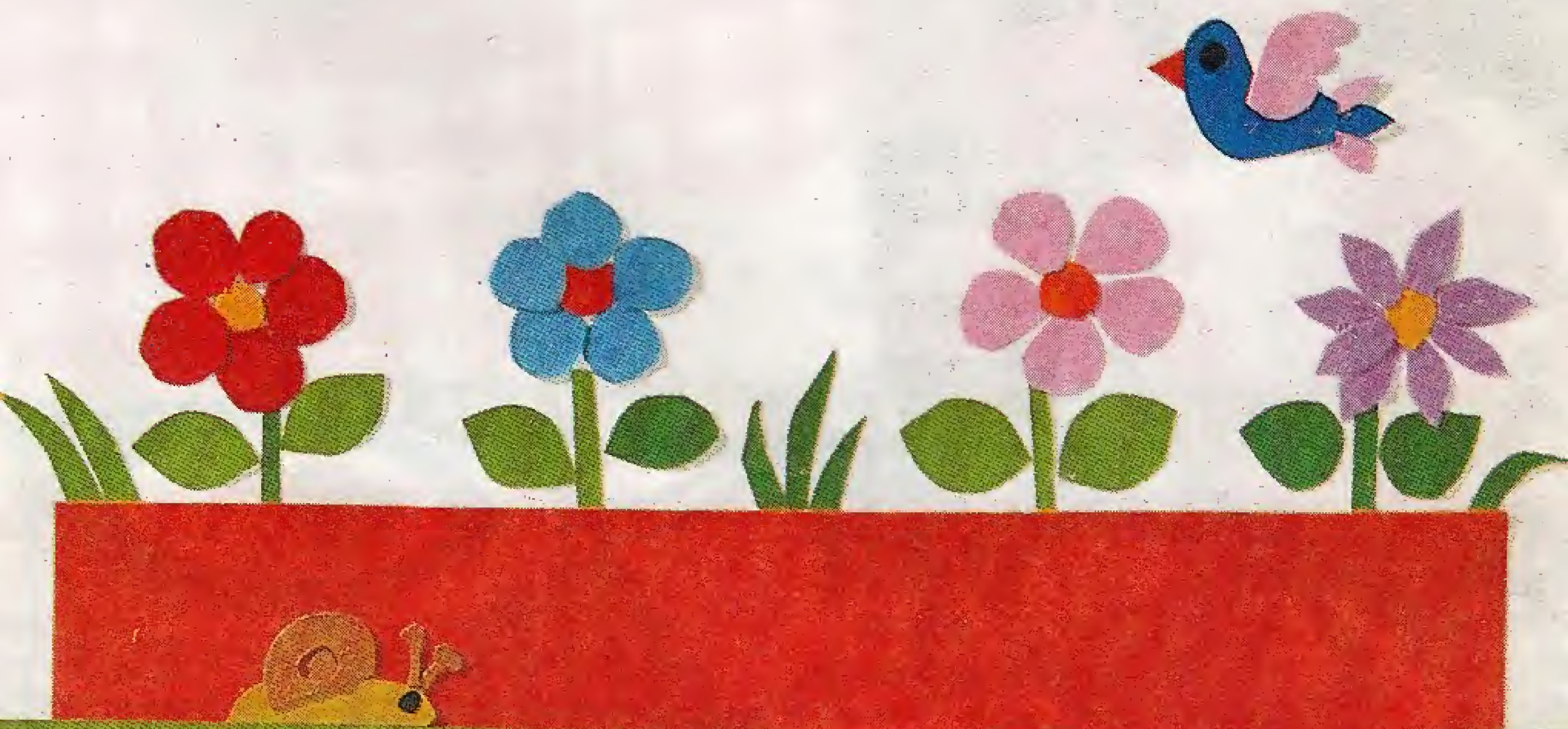
My brother looks at me with a smile I don't like. He says slowly, "Yes you are. You eat too much."

I don't eat too much, not really. He eats much more than I do. But I can't tell him that.

I shake my fist at him and cry, "Yes, I can eat more than you. Much more. I'll show you at lunch."

"And I'll show you," growls Micki.

We don't talk to each other for over an hour.





By lunch time I'm hungry. I can hardly wait for Mother to give us our food.

"Puris," I cry. "I love puris." I take six of them. My brother takes seven.

I take one more and begin to eat very fast. My brother eats faster.



Soon there is *puri alloo* all over us.

"Stop eating like pigs," scolds Mother.

My brother sniggers softly and whispers, "I am a bigger pig."

"You certainly look like one," I say loud and clear.

My brother picks up another puri, but Mother stops him. "Enough," she says. "You'll make yourself sick."

"I am feeling sick
already," I tell Micki.

"So am I," he replies.
I don't know how sick
he is, but I must be feeling
sicker.



“Now look at you,”
scolds Mother. “How
silly can you be. There
will be no sweet dish for
either of you. Go and
play in the garden.”







In the garden Micki picks up a stone. "I can throw stones farther than you," he says and flings the stone—right into our neighbour's garden.

"Don't do that," I say, "you might hit Kalu, Uncle Lalu's dog."

"So what," says my brother, "I'm not scared of him."

"Of course you are," I say. "But I'm not. I like him."

"I like him too," cries my brother. "Come, I'll show you."



We climb on to the boundary wall and look into the neighbour's garden. There is Kalu. He looks tough, and ferocious.

He is certainly as tough as he looks but I know he is not ferocious. Kalu wags his tail and barks.

My brother says, "I can jump down and pat him. I'm not scared."

I don't believe him.

He says once more, "I'll jump down and touch him. You'll see."





But he doesn't jump. He sits next to me on the wall and looks down at Kalu.

Micki is scared. He is very, very scared. I can make that out from his eyes.

So I say gently to him, "I believe you."

My brother stares at me surprised. "What?" he asks. "You *believe* me?"

"Yes I do," I reply simply.

"Oh!" says my brother. Just, "Oh." And then he adds, "Come. Let's go."



He takes my hand. Together
we jump down into our garden.

“Let’s play cricket,” says my
brother Micki. “Come I’ll teach
you.”

And he does!







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